

INFORMATION SHEET

FOR ROCKHOUNDING, METAL DETECTING AND PLACER OPERATIONS CONDUCTED ON THE SAN JUAN PUBLIC LANDS

Rockhounding, metal detecting, panning, dredging, or sluicing have become very popular activities on public lands administered by the USFS and BLM in Southwestern Colorado. For the purposes of this information sheet, we will collectively refer to these activities as “placering operations.” The public land management agencies in Southwestern Colorado have agreed to a consistent policy and process that is both efficient and easy to understand. However, even this process has requirements which must be met. In general, you will find that operations with increased potential for surface disturbance require more agency oversight and operator documentation. We hope this information sheet and packet will help you better understand how to enjoy whatever placer operation you pursue while assuring the wise use of your public lands. This information does not apply to private property or mining claims. You must have the surface owner’s or claim owner’s permission to operate on such lands.

- ***What are these activities and how are they defined? How do I get started?*** The attached Guidelines and General Procedures lists the different mineral activities and types of placer operations and provides information on what actions are needed prior to beginning work. Please contact the listed USFS or BLM office of the San Juan Public Lands should you have additional questions after reviewing the Guidelines. In many cases, no further communication with the USFS or BLM is needed and you may begin your activity immediately.
- ***Where can these activities be conducted in this area?*** The lands covered by this policy include the San Juan National Forest (USDA Forest Service) and a portion of the San Juan Resource Area (Bureau of Land Management), collectively referred to as the San Juan Public Lands. This policy does **NOT** apply to any non-federal land, even if it is within the boundaries of the San Juan Public Lands. We encourage you to obtain more detailed maps and information.
- ***What are the areas where mineral activities are NOT allowed?*** Rockhounding, metal detecting and placering operations are **NOT** allowed in lands designated as Wilderness. These include the Weminuche, Lizard Head and South San Juan Wilderness Areas. Other lands have been withdrawn including the Piedra Area, campgrounds and administrative sites. The San Juan National Forest withdrawn lands are **NOT** available for mineral purposes. The BLM withdrawn lands may be open for mineral operations on a case by case basis.
- ***What mitigation measures need to be met for placering? Do I need a Section 404 Permit from the Army Corps of Engineers?*** Specific mitigation measures may be required based on the type of operation. Activities on or adjacent to waterways or wetlands need to comply with the conditions of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (ACE) Nationwide Permit No. 44 for Mining Activities (enclosed). Please review this (ACE) publication and comply with all necessary requirements.
- ***Do I need to submit anything to the USFS or BLM?*** Use the Guidelines and General Procedures to determine what, if anything, you may need to submit, and the public lands office for the area of interest. For motorized placering or sluicing, the agencies recommend that you complete and submit the Placer Notification that is included. This Notification will help the BLM or USFS assess the level of impacts associated with your proposed operation. This Notification may serve as a Notice of Intent under both agencies’ surface management regulations.
- ***How do I get information on placering operations and what is the process for handling mechanized operations?*** You should contact the USFS or BLM by phone or in person and request information. The agency will send a packet of information which includes this Information Sheet, Guidelines and General Procedures, ACE Nationwide Permit No. 44, and Placer Notification. After reviewing the information sent to you by the agency, you determine what actions are needed based on what activities you plan. Fill out the Placer Notification, if necessary, and send it to the public lands office responsible for activities in that particular area at least 15 days in advance of your proposed operations. The agency will review the Notification to determine the level of impact and will notify you to proceed, or that additional information or documentation is necessary.

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